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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SY-05 MCT-01 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 A-01
OPR-02 PRS-01 /063 W
----------041659 301726Z /47
R 301600Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA
TO AMEMBASSY ROME
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 7831
AMEMBASSY LONDON

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ROME FOR RSO

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ASEC
SUBJECT: WITHDRAWAL OF AFM PROTECTION FROM CHANCERY AND RESIDENCE

1. AMBASSADOR RECEIVED LETTER 29 DECEMBER FROM COMMANDING GENERAL OF ARMED FORCES OF MALTA INFORMING US THAT AS OF 0700 HOURS JANUARY 1 THE PRACTICE OF PROVIDING ARMED FORCES OF MALTA (AFM) PROTECTION FOR EMBASSIES AND RESIDENCES IN MALTA WOULD BE DISCONTINUED.

2. LETTER DID NOT SO STATE, BUT WE HAVE LEARNED SINCE THAT THE ONLY EXCEPTIONS TO THIS ACTION ARE THE GERMAN, ISRAELI AND ARAB EMBASSIES IN MALTA, THESE MISSIONS BEING INFORMED THAT THE DECISION TO WITHDRAW AFM PERSONNEL WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED FOR THE PRESENT IN THEIR CASE.

3. AMBASSADOR WAS CALLED TO FOREIGN OFFICE THIS MORNING (AS WERE, SEPARATELY, CERTAIN OTHER AMBASSADORS) TO BE GIVEN FURTHER EXPLANATION BY FOREIGN SECRETARY ABELA. ABELA
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APOLOGIZED FOR THE SHORT NOTICE INVOLVED IN THIS ACTION BUT PUT IT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE DEATH BY LETTER BOMB INCIDENT HERE TWO DAYS AGO OF YOUNG DAUGHTER OF MALTESE MEDICAL DOCTOR (SEE SEPTEL). HE SAID THAT IN LIGHT OF THIS TRAGIC INCIDENT AND A SIMILAR LETTER BOMB DIRECTED AGAINST A LABOR MP WHICH DID NOT EXPLODE, THE GOM HAD NO ALTERNATIVE EXCEPT TO UTILIZE ALL EXISTING

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SECURITY PERSONNEL TO INTENSIFY PROTECTION AGAINST THE
POSSIBILITY OF FUTURE INCIDENTS.

4. THE GOM HAD THEREFORE DECIDED TO WITHDRAW AFM GUARDS
FROM DIPLOMATIC PREMISES, WHICH HAD BEEN IN ANY EVENT, AS
ABELA PUT IT, "SOMETHING OF A LUXURY". HE SAID
THE WITHDRAWAL OF GUARDS AT THE GERMAN, ISRAELI AND
ARAB EMBASSIES WOULD NOT TAKE PLACE IMMEDIATELY BECAUSE
OF POSSIBLE DANGERS THERE, BUT THAT THE ACTION TAKEN BY
THE GOVERNMENT WAS INTENDED TO APPLY ULTIMATELY IN THE CASE
OF ALL EMBASSIES.

5. TO MEET ITS RESPONSIBILITIES TO INSURE THE SECURITY OF
DIPLOMATIC PREMISES IN MALTA, ABELA SAID THE GOM INTENDED TO
INTENSIFY ITS EXISTING POLICE PROTECTION IN THE CASE OF
ALL EMBASSIES AND RESIDENCES THROUGH GREATER USE OF
ROVING POLICE CARS. THE GOM WAS ALSO PREPARED TO
COOPERATE IN ANY APPROPRIATE WAY TO HELP AN EMBASSY
INSURE ITS OWN ARRANGEMENTS FOR SECURITY, AND IN THE
CASE OF ANY REPORTED THREAT THAT CAME TO THE ATTENTION OF
ANY EMBASSY WOULD OF COURSE WORK CLOSELY TO INSURE
SECURITY AS REQUIRED.

6. WHEN AMBASSADOR ASKED WHETHER AFM GUARDS WOULD BE
RESTORED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PREVIOUS PRACTICE WHEN
THE GOM'S CONCERN OVER THE LETTER BOMB INCIDENTS PASSED,
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ABELA REPLIED THAT HE DID NOT THINK SO. HE THOUGHT THE
PRACTICE FROM HENCEFORTH WOULD BE TO RELY ON POLICE
PROTECTION.

7. AMBASSADOR SAID THAT WE FULLY SHARED THE GOM'S SENSE
OF REVULSION AND CONCERN OVER THE TRAGIC LETTER BOMB
INCIDENTS. WE HAD WELCOMED THE GOVERNMENT'S PROVISION
OF AFM GUARDS FOR SECURITY PURPOSES IN THE PAST. WE
WELCOMED THE RECOGNITION BY THE GOM OF ITS RESPONSIBILITY
TO INSURE THE SECURITY OF OUR MISSION HERE AGAINST ANY
POSSIBLE DANGER BY THE ASSURANCE THAT POLICE PROTECTION
WOULD BE INTENSIFIED.

8. AMBASSADOR WENT ON TO SAY, HOWEVER, THAT WHILE WE
DID NOT PERCEIVE ANY IMMEDIATE THREAT TO OUR PREMISES
AT THE MOMENT, THE GOM SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT IN THE
CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM WE WOULD NEED TO
CONSIDER CAREFULLY WHAT STEPS IF ANY WE NOW SHOULD TAKE
TO INSURE SECURITY HERE. AMBASSADOR SAID WE HAD IN ANY EVENT
BEEN RECONSIDERING THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR SECURITY WITHIN
THE CHANCERY WITH A VIEW TO STRENGTHENING THAT SECURITY.
AMBASSADOR ALSO SAID THAT WHILE GOM WOULD NATURALLY COME

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TO ITS OWN CONCLUSION AS TO THE THREAT FACING ANY EMBASSY
HERE, IN PRINCIPLE WE COULD NOT ACCEPT DRAWING ANY
DISTINCTION, GIVEN THE NATURE OF THE BEAST WE ARE DEALING
WITH REGARDING INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM AND GIVEN PARTICULARLY
THE FACT THAT USG DIPLOMATS AND PREMISES ABROAD HAD
SUFFERED MORE FROM INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM THAN ANY
OTHER COUNTRY.

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OPR-02 PRS-01 /063 W
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ROME FOR RSO

9. ABELA'S RESPONSE TO THIS WAS TO REITERATE WHAT HE HAD
SAID ABOUT INTENSIFIED POLICE PROTECTION, AND TO NOTE THAT
NO MALTESE DIPLOMATIC MISSION ABROAD, TO HIS KNOWLEDGE, HAD
ANYWHERE NEAR THE KIND OF PROTECTION THE GOM HAD PROVIDED
HERE IN THE PAST WITH ITS AFM MISSION GUARDS. HE NOTED IN
THIS CONNECTION THAT MALTESE DIPLOMATS IN NEW YORK AND
WASHINGTON DO NOT REGULARLY HAVE SPECIFIC POLICE PROTECTION,
BUT THAT MALTA'S MISSION IN NEW YORK EARLIER THIS YEAR HAD
RECEIVED A NUMBER OF THREATS AND IN RESPONSE TO A REQUEST
HAD OBTAINED ASSIGNED POLICE PRESENCE UNTIL THREAT HAD
PASSED.

10. COMMENT: GIVEN WHAT WE PERCEIVE TO BE THE NATURE
OF THE THREAT LOCALLY, ABELA IS RIGHT THAT THE AFM
PRESENCE HAS BEEN A BIT OF A LUXURY. MOREOVER THEIR
CAPABILITY IN DEALING WITH ANY REAL THREAT HAS BEEN FAR
FROM ASSURED. IN ANY EVENT WE SEE NO REASON TO EXPECT
THE GOM'S DECISION TO BE REVERSED SO THAT HENCEFORTH WE

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WILL NEED TO RELY ON THE ASSURANCES OF POLICE PROTECTION
AND WHATEVER SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY GUARD ARRANGEMENTS
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MAY PROVE NECESSARY, ESPECIALLY AT RESIDENCE. WE WILL
BE MAKING OUR RECOMMENDATIONS SEPARATELY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
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Concepts: n/a
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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Litigation History:
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Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
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TAGS: ASEC
To: ROME
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/34760efd-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
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